

Oxalis exilis

COMMON NAMES

creeping oxalis, yellow oxalis

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Perennial herb without bulbils; taproot absent or weakly developed. Stems creeping or ascending up to 380 mm long, very sparsely antrorse-hairy. Leaves all cauline, tufted, 3-foliolate; leaflets sessile, 2.5-6.0 x 3.0-6.0 mm, mostly bright green, cuneate-obcordate, bilobed, glabrous above, pubescent below, margins ciliate, sinus cut to 1/3 leaflet length, lobes obovate, divergent, apices obtuse, 2-3 mm apart; petioles 10-90 mm long, with antrorse hairs; stipules to 2 mm long, conspicuous, with apex lobed or truncate, or inconspicuous with apex tapering abruptly to petiole, more or less ciliate. Inflorescences axillary, 1-2-flowered; peduncles at least as long as leaves, antrorse-hairy; pedicels erect, sometimes deflexed in fruit. Sepals oblong, 1.5-3.0 mm long, ciliate or glabrous; petals yellow, 4.5-9.0 mm long. Capsule 5.0-10.0 mm long, conical to cylindrical, usually moderately retrorse-hairy, often with scattered septate hairs; seeds 1.0-1.4 mm long, strongly transversely ribbed.

SIMILAR TAXA

Rather variable but recognised by the widely creeping habit and lack of bulbils and obvious taproot; inconspicuous to conspicuous, lobed, truncate or tapering abruptly stipules up to 2 mm long; sparsely antrorse hairy stems; short and broad fruits (5.0-11 x 2-3 mm) with tapering apices that are clad in mostly simple (sometimes septate) hairs; and by the 1.0-1.4 mm long seeds which are strongly transversely ridged.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Australia, New Zealand and probably the western Pacific. Naturalised in parts of Europe and the United Kingdom. In New Zealand present on the Three Kings, North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine (up to 1100 m a.s.l.). However, mostly in lowland areas. Common in urban areas and in disturbed or successional indigenous habitats. Rarely in dense forest (though often colonising tracksides) and tussock grassland.

GENUS

Oxalis

FAMILY

Oxalidaceae



Oxalis exilis. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Stokes Valley, Lower Hutt. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 17/04/2006, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY

Oxalis exilis A.Cunn.

SYNONYMS

Oxalis corniculata var. *microphylla* Hook.f.; ?*Oxalis corniculata* var. *ciliifera* (Cunn.) Hook.f.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Throughout the year

FRUITING

Throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown and weedy. This species is usually present in gardens and is often the dominant or sole *Oxalis* present in lawns. It is unlikely that people would want to cultivate it.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY

oxalis: From the Greek word *oxus* meaning acid or sharp

exilis: Thin

NVS CODE

OXAEXI

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland](#)" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025](#)" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Webb, C.J.; Sykes, W.R.; Garnock-Jones, P.J. 1988: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. IV. Naturalised Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms, Dicotyledons. Christchurch, New Zealand, Botany Division, D.S.I.R.

[Wilcox, M.D. Creeping *Oxalis* carpets on Motuihe island. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 56: 19](#)

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 November 2005). Description adapted from Webb et al. (1988). Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/oxalis-exilis/>

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